

The following claims are presented for examination:

1-19 . (canceled)

20. (currently amended) A method comprising:

receiving, at a data processing system, a requirement from a prospective purchaser for a first chemical;

comparing, in said data processing system, said requirement to analyses of batches of said first chemical that are available for purchase from at least two different suppliers through said data processing system to identify a batch that satisfies said requirement, wherein said analyses are obtained from a testing facility that tests samples of said batches in accordance with a uniform standard that is established for said first chemical, **and further wherein each batch that is available for purchase is analyzed by said testing facility;** and

outputting, from said data processing system, an indicium of said identified batch to said prospective purchaser.

21. (canceled)

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 further comprising:

compiling statistics in said data processing system, said statistics comprising information about purchases of said first chemical and purchases of other chemicals facilitated by said data processing system; and

outputting said statistics to a statistics subscriber.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein said identified batch of said first chemical is priced below a price at which said first chemical is normally sold.

24. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein said uniform standard is developed by owners/operators of said data processing system.

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein said indicium does not provide any information selected from the group consisting of a supplier of said identified batch and a brand name of said first chemical in said identified batch.

26. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 comprising storing said analyses in an inventory database.

27. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 comprising:

obtaining further analyses of further batches of said first chemical, wherein said further batches are analyzed in accordance with said uniform standard established for said first chemical; and

updating said inventory database by inputting said further analyses into said inventory database.

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 comprising:

obtaining analyses of batches of a second chemical, wherein said batches are analyzed in accordance with a uniform standard established for said second chemical; and
updating said inventory database by inputting said analyses of batches of said second chemical into said inventory database.

29. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 comprising storing said requirement in a requirements database.

30. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein said requirement comprises an allowable range of values for at least some of said physical and chemical characteristics that define said uniform standard, the method further comprising assigning a rank to at least one of said physical characteristics or chemical characteristics, wherein a value of said rank indicates a relative importance of satisfying said one physical characteristic or chemical characteristic in determining whether or not a batch satisfies said requirement.

31. (currently amended) A method comprising:

outputting, from a data processing system, a uniform standard for a chemical, said uniform standard defined by a supplier-independent set of physical and chemical characteristics of said chemical;

receiving, at said data processing system, a requirement from a prospective purchaser for said chemical, wherein said requirement comprises an allowable range of values for at least some of said physical and chemical characteristics that define said uniform standard, and wherein said chemical is available for purchase via said data processing system; and

comparing, via said data processing system, said requirement to analyses of a plurality of batches of said chemical that are available for purchase through said data processing system, **wherein each batch that is available for purchase is analyzed by said testing facility.**

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 31 further comprising storing said requirement in said data processing system.

33. (canceled)

34. (previously presented) The method of claim 33 further comprising outputting, from said data processing system, an indicium of at least one batch of said chemical, of said plurality thereof, that satisfies said requirement.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 34 wherein said indicium does not provide any information selected from the group consisting of a supplier of said one batch and a brand name of said first chemical in said one batch.

36. (previously presented) The method of claim 31 further comprising:
compiling statistics in said data processing system, said statistics comprising information about purchases of said chemical facilitated by said data processing system;
and
outputting said statistics to an interested party.

37. (previously presented) A method comprising:
receiving, at a data processing system, a requirement from a prospective purchaser for a first chemical;
comparing, in said data processing system, said requirement to analyses of batches of said first chemical that are available for purchase through said data processing system to identify a batch that satisfies said requirement, wherein said analyses are obtained from a testing facility that tests samples of said batches in accordance a uniform standard that is established for said first chemical, **and wherein each batch that is available for purchase is analyzed by said testing facility.**

38. (previously presented) The method of claim 37 further comprising outputting, from said data processing system, an indicium of said identified batch to said prospective purchaser, wherein said indicium does not provide any information selected from the group consisting of a supplier of said identified batch and a brand name of said first chemical in said identified batch.

39. (previously presented) The method of claim 37 further comprising:
obtaining analyses of additional batches of said first chemical, wherein said additional batches are analyzed in accordance with said uniform standard established for said first chemical; and
updating an inventory database by inputting said additional analyses into said inventory database.

40. (previously presented) The method of claim 36 wherein said requirement comprises a range of acceptable values for at least some of a plurality of characteristics that define said uniform standard, the method further comprising assigning a rank to at least

one of said characteristics, wherein a value of said rank indicates a relative importance of satisfying said one characteristic in determining whether or not a batch satisfies said requirement.